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Handel

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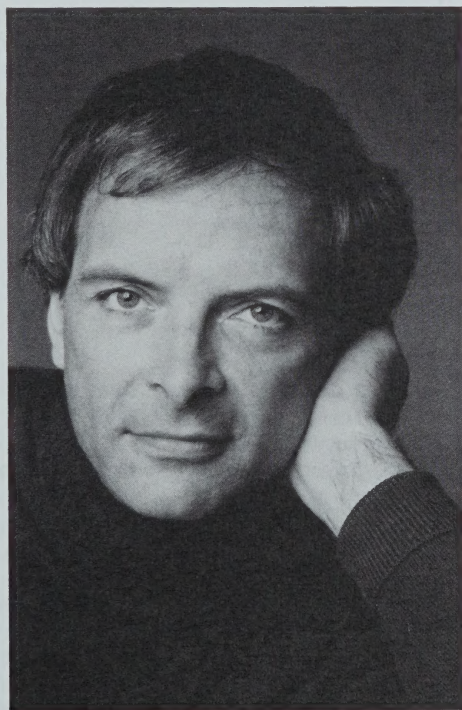
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THE NEW YORK TIMES

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Christopher Hogwood, *Artistic Director*

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CONCERTO GROSSO IN B FLAT, OP.6 NO.7
Largo — Allegro — Largo — Andante — Hornpipe

SILETE VENTI
Sharon Baker, soprano

CONCERTO GROSSO IN A, OP.6 NO.11
Andante larghetto e staccato — Allegro
Largo e staccato — Andante — Allegro

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WATER MUSIC

Horn Suite
Ouverture (Largo-Allegro) — Adagio e staccato
Allegro — Air — Minuet for the French Horn
Bourrée (Presto) — Hornpipe — Allegro

Flute Suite
Sarabande — Presto — Menuet I
Menuet II — Country Dance

Trumpet Suite
Allegro — Hornpipe — Trumpet Minuet
Lentement — Bourrée

This concert is being recorded by WBUR 90.9 FM.

The Handel & Haydn Society is supported in part by generous grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



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June 15, 1992 at 8:00 p.m. • June 22, 1992 at 8:00 p.m.
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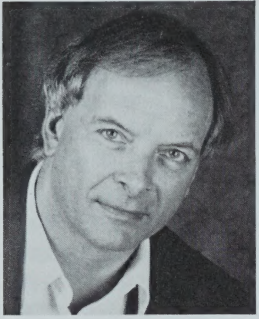
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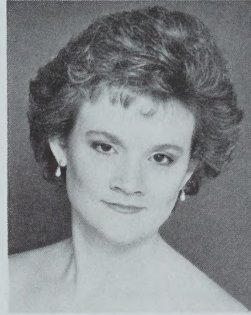
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Christopher Hogwood is one of the world's most active conductors and a highly successful recording artist for London/L'Oiseau-Lyre. The founder of The Academy of Ancient Music, the first British orchestra formed to play exclusively Baroque and

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SHARON BAKER, SOPRANO



Sharon Baker is widely acclaimed as a singer of Baroque and contemporary music. Ms. Baker's recent solo engagements have included *Messiah* and Bach's *B Minor Mass* with Christopher Hogwood and the Handel & Haydn Society at Lincoln Center, music of Mozart with

Boston's Banchetto Musicale, and Handel oratorios with the Dallas Bach Society. She has appeared at the Tanglewood and Aspen Music Festivals. Ms. Baker also sang Mahler's *Third Symphony* with the Boston Philharmonic and premiered the Philip Glass opera, *The Fall of the House of Usher* at the American Repertory Theater. She is currently working on the new Robert Aldridge opera, *Elmer Gantry*, and will be soloist in H&H's production of *Messiah* next season. Ms. Baker has recorded music of Haydn and Handel on the Arabesque label, and is featured on a release of Mozart's sacred music on Harmonia Mundi.

THE HANDEL & HAYDN SOCIETY

The Handel & Haydn Society is America's preeminent period orchestra and professional chorus, and under the direction of Christopher Hogwood is a leader in "Historically Informed Performance," playing Baroque and Classical music with the instruments and techniques of the period to reveal a fresh new sound. H&H was founded in 1815, and proved itself an innovator early on with first performances in America of Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *B Minor Mass*, and other important works. In recent years, H&H has continued its tradition of innovation by offering imaginative programs that cross musical and artistic genres. H&H performs locally in more than forty concerts each year, and has achieved national and international acclaim through its recordings with London/L'Oiseau-Lyre, national broadcasts on American Public Radio, and sold-out performances at Lincoln Center in New York. Each year, H&H's unique Education Program brings the joy of music to more than 6,000 students in schools across Massachusetts. H&H's latest recording, of Mozart's orchestration of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, will be released in the summer of 1992.

Join H&H for a special
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(See page 4 for details.)
H&H's performance
of *Four Seasons*
was sold out last year —
buy your tickets now!

HANDEL AND THE PASTORAL TRADITION

In late seventeenth-century Italy, the cantata was conceived of as a scene that might have appeared in any opera, but was presented as vocal chamber music without staging, and had an audience enraptured by the ways music could project, illustrate, and decorate a text. The poets who wrote texts for cantatas and operas frequently drew their imagery — and the stock characters and dramatic situations — from a long literary tradition of pastoral poetry that went back to the classical poets Theocritus and Virgil. Their Arcadian themes — of the rustic life of shepherds, and the tension between idyllic nature and the modern city — lay dormant through the Middle Ages, but were rediscovered and popularized by the poets of the Italian Renaissance. Petrarch, in the fourteenth century, was among the first to compose Latin eclogues in imitation of Virgil, but it was Jacopo Sannazaro (1458-1530) whose *Arcadia*, written in Italian, had the most direct, continuing influence on Italian and English literature and music. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Arcadian poetry inspired music hymning the murmuring of the breezes, the rippling of waters, the singing of birds. And no composer entered more enthusiastically into the pastoral compact than Handel.

ET IN ARCADIA HANDEL

After meeting Prince Ferdinando de' Medici in Hamburg, Handel resolved to go to Italy "on his own bottom" (as his biographer Mainwaring quaintly expressed it), "as soon as he could make a purse for that occasion." At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the prestige of Italian music was at its height. The concerto and the sonata, the principal instrumental forms of the late Baroque, were widely developed. But it was Italian vocalism that reigned supreme, and the cantata and opera were everywhere. Any composer who wished to compete in that market would naturally desire to learn from the source. Handel arrived in Italy in the autumn of 1706 — at a time when the pastoral influence was in full force. He was twenty-one years old, ready to learn and ripe to conquer. He spent almost four years in Italy, years that definitively influenced his future path and style. All of the music on the present program bears the mark of Handel's Italian years, even though some of it was not composed until four decades later. It was in Italy that he met Arcangelo Corelli and heard that master's *Opus 6* concertos, which form so palpable a model for Handel's own *Opus 6*. In Italy, too, Handel adopted

the melting lyricism, the bravura vocalism, and the fresh scoring that were to characterize his operas and oratorios alike.

COMPETING WITH CORELLI

Handel encountered Corelli under particularly gratifying circumstances: the older master was the leader of the orchestra in the spectacular Italian premiere of Handel's oratorio *La Resurrezione*. Corelli's *Opus 6* Concerti Grossi were not published until 1714, but it is likely that some of them had already been composed, and that Handel had the opportunity to hear them while in contact with Corelli. The wide success of those twelve concertos would surely be a challenge to a composer, and Handel's *Opus 3* concertos were one response. Another came much later, in 1739, at a crucial stage in his life: just as he was turning definitively from Italian opera to English oratorio.

Some creative force welled up in Handel in the autumn of 1739 to generate a dozen large orchestral scores, all written in one month

between September 29 and October 30 — an average of one concerto every two-and-a-half days. It was conventional to publish instrumental works in groups of six or twelve. When Handel's new works appeared in 1740 as "Opus 6" (he might well have chosen the number to highlight his challenge to Corelli), he or his publisher John Walsh chose to translate the Italian genre "concerto grosso" into English as "Grand Concertos" — a perfectly suitable title whether we consider it to be an identification of genre or a critical evaluation. His works range more freely and are more varied than the Corellian model — they are bold and forward-looking, drawing upon a wide variety of source types and styles, making the whole reflect his own distinct personality. Handel added oboe parts to a few of these concertos later, on occasions when he wished to play a concerto during the intermission to one of his oratorios. The present performance will follow the original published score, the most purely "Corellian" form of the concertos, without the "optional" parts.

Concerto No. 7, in B-flat, opens with a brief, broad, serious introduction, which serves as a foil to the almost comical fugue subject that follows. Most of it consists of a single note, and few composers would have dared be so outrageous. The 3/4 Largo movement that follows is cast primarily as an expressive melody over a richly chromatic

*Arcadian
poetry inspired
music that hymned
murmuring breezes,
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and singing birds.
And no composer
entered more
enthusiastically
into the pastoral
compact than
Handel.*

accompaniment. The Italian term "Andante" means "walking, moving along," and Handel's Andante takes the term quite literally. The melody line in the first violin sings its delicate song over a steady trudging accompaniment. The closing Hornpipe movement takes delightful energy from its melodic syncopations over a broad 3/2 accompaniment.

Concerto No. 11 in A is full of wonderful surprises, almost as if a secret program lurked behind the concerto form. It begins with sharp, dramatically large gestures but frequently resorts to hushed repeated notes which become more and more prominent until the end of the first movement almost suggests a Vivaldian pictorial image from *The Four Seasons*. Handel gives no clue to explain this striking first movement. But it ends on a half-cadence and immediately launches a splendid double fugue with one theme in a vigorous eighth-note patter and the other in wispy bits of sixteenths, separated by silences. A brief phrase, *Largo e staccato*, recalls the opening movement, and precedes the Andante, a triple-meter dance with progressively livelier subdivisions for the solo violin. The final Allegro seems to open up the Arcadian world again with trills (suggesting birdsong) and increasingly lively solo outbursts.

THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR

So thoroughly did the images of pastoralism fill Italian poetry in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century that they easily found their way into Latin texts, intended to be set as sacred compositions. Not that there is necessarily anything strange in this; the celebration of nature in pastoral poetry could easily be extended to praise a Creator of all this burgeoning life and luxuriant beauty, and a theological lesson could be added.

Handel wrote several Latin cantatas during his Italian years, but he was not yet entirely mature in the combination of a learned contrapuntal style and the *cantabile* vocal line (eventually, of course, he was to become one of the greatest masters of this combination). But the cantata *Silete venti* is as lyrically gratifying as any of the secular cantatas of the period. We must ask, however, of what period? Stylistically the work seems to be connected to Handel's early Italian visit. But most specialists believe that he composed *Silete venti* in February 1729 on a return visit to Italy (seeking to hire star singers for his opera company in London), and on that occasion, borrowed from one of his early Roman cantatas, *Saevit tellus* of 1708, the "Allelulia" in 12/8 time that closes the work.

The opening recitative and closing aria of *Silete venti* are primarily responsible for the "Arcadian" mood of the piece. The singer's injunction to the winds and branches of the trees to hush their murmuring may well be an oblique reference to the famous description of Armida's magic garden in Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, a passage that in Handel's time had been set to music by so many composers for more than a century that the image could immediately call up the proper pastoral response from composer, singer, and listener. At all events, Handel here, as so often, projected in his music a love of natural beauty, and created yet another hymn to the sensuous and expressive qualities of the human voice.

TO BE PLAYED ON THE WATER, PERHAPS

One of the best-known Handel stories — recounted by the composer's earliest biographer, the Reverend John Mainwaring — tells how Handel obtained leave from

his employer in Hanover to go to England for a visit but never returned. As fate would have it, the Elector of Hanover became George I of England and effectively pursued his truant



composer there. According to Mainwaring, Handel's delinquency put him out of the king's good graces; and the *Water Music* was first performed to serenade the king from a neighboring barge on the river Thames in 1715. The king was so taken with the music that he asked who had composed it, and upon learning that it was Handel, promptly forgave him for his earlier negligence. In fact, although some movements of the *Water Music* were performed at a river outing in 1715, there is not the slightest evidence that Handel needed his monarch's forgiveness. It is clear, though, that music by Handel was played on the river two years later, when the *Daily Courant* of 19 July 1717 reported:

a City Company's Barge was employ'd for the Musick, wherein were 50 Instruments of all sorts, who play'd . . . the finest Symphonies, compos'd express for this Occasion, by Mr. Hendel; which his Majesty liked so well, that he caus'd it to be plaid over three times in going and returning.

The work we know as the *Water Music* was not published in anything like its complete form until the 1730s, so, despite this description, it is very unlikely that King George heard three performances of the work that we know today.

In fact, the title incorrectly implies that we are dealing with a single work. From the scoring and the keys we can see that there are three orchestral suites here, not one. These differ greatly in character and apparent purpose. The first and longest, in the key of F, includes horns along with its woodwinds and strings and could have been intended for outdoor performance. The second suite, in G, is clearly indoor music, with its quieter flutes and recorders. And the third, in D, is the most splendid of all, owing to its festive use of trumpets. This performance will present the work as three separate suites. The first suite, in F, will be performed with an added Allegro, that has been published in D at the opening of the Trumpet

suite, but also exists in another version with horns. This makes a compelling conclusion to the suite in F, for without it, the horns are actually silent for several movements at the end of their suite. The softer suite in G will be heard in the middle (as if it were music played indoors during supper), and the trumpet-brilliance of the D-major suite would seem to bring the holiday to a close, as the procession floats triumphantly back down the river.

—Steven Ledbetter

Steven Ledbetter is musicologist and program annotator for the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

FOR FURTHER READING AND LISTENING:

- Ellen T. Harris, *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition* (Oxford) delves into Handel's Italian experiences.
- The Handel & Haydn Society is recording the 12 *Opus 6* concertos (without oboes) for London/L'Oiseau-Lyre, for a 1993 release. Trevor Pinnock's recording of *Opus 6* with the English Concert on 3 compact discs (DG Archiv; 410 897-899-2AH) includes the oboe parts. Iona Brown and Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields offer an excellent reading on modern instruments (Philips; 410 048-2PH3).
- Trevor Pinnock and the English Concert have a splendid recording of *Water Music* (DG Archiv; 525-2AH).
- Two fine recordings of *Silete venti* include: Trevor Pinnock and the English Concert with Jennifer Smith, soloist (DG Archiv; 419 736-2AH); Harry Christophers and an ensemble, with Lynne Dawson, soloist (Chandos; 0517).

— Steven Ledbetter

SILETE VENTI

Sinfonia

Largo — Allegro

Accompanied recitative

Silete venti, nolite murmurare frondes,
quia anima mea dulcedine requiescit.

Aria

Dulcis amor, Jesu care
quis non cupit te amare?
Veni, veni, transfige me.
Si tu feris, non sunt clades
tuae plagae, sunt suaves,
quia totus vivo in te.
(*da capo*)

Accompanied recitative

O fortunata anima,
o jucundissimus triumphus,
o foelicissima laetitia!

Aria

Date certa, date flores
me coronent vestri honores,
date palmas nobiles.
Surgent venti, et beatae
spirent almae fortunatae
Auras coeli fulgidas.
(*da capo*)

Aria

Alleluia.

Be silent, winds, rustle no more, you leaves,
for my soul rests in sweet bliss.

Sweet love, dear Jesus,
who does not desire to love you?
Come, come, pierce me.
If you strike, your blows
are not heavy but soothing,
for I live wholly in you.

Oh, fortunate soul,
oh, most joyful triumph,
oh, happiest delight!

Offer garlands, offer flowers,
may your honours crown me,
offer noble palm leaves.
Let the winds rise, and let
blessed and happy souls
breathe the radiant airs of heaven.

Alleluia.

— Translation by Anthony Hicks

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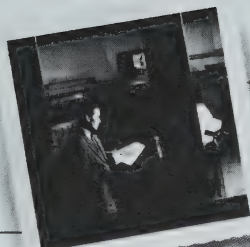
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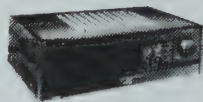
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